

# THE COMING OF KARUNA

A VISION OF CREATIVE LOVE

BY RANJEE G. SHAHANI  
B.A., D.LITT., F.R.S.L.

WITH APPRECIATION BY  
HAVELOCK ELLIS

*Let me be consumed in giving light.*  
CARLYLE.



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To  
LIEUT.-COLONEL  
SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND  
A TRUE LOVER OF THE EAST

## EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.  
S. A. KAPADIA.

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## APPRECIATION

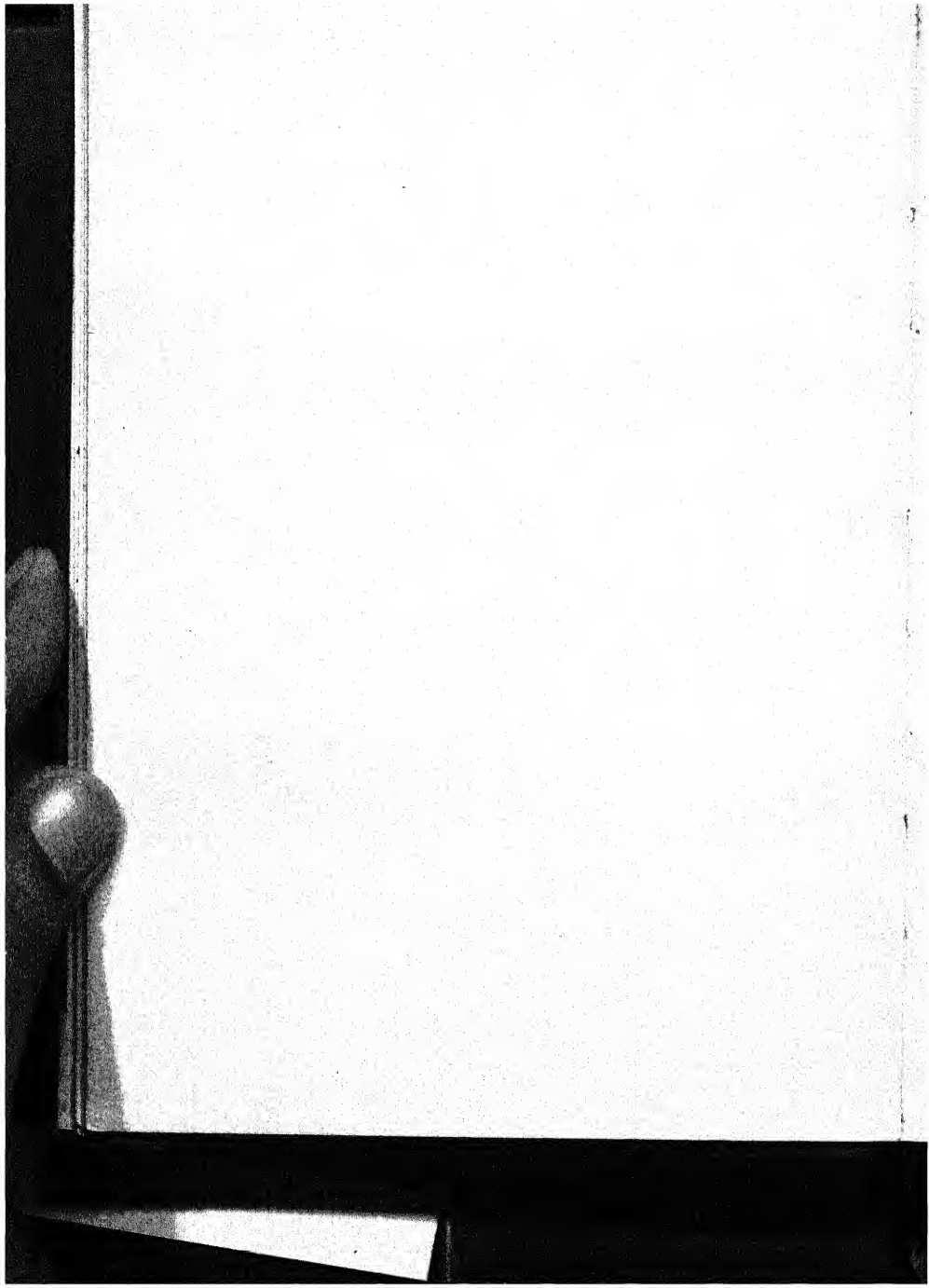
16 March, 1934.

DEAR DR. SHAHANI,—

Thank you for showing me your new book, which I now return. . . . It is a book to have at hand and to meditate on at leisure. I am very pleased that it is to appear under good auspices, and it certainly needs no introduction; it will speak for itself. On every page one is conscious of the scholarly atmosphere, of the fine insight into deep problems, of the delicate and sensitive style. Again and again I find myself in sympathetic agreement, as in regard to generalization, to mysticism and also with reference to the "meaningless" and its organization. . . .

Sincerely yours,

HAVELOCK ELLIS.



## PRELUDE

ALL my life I have been a student, and hope to remain one to the end. I have browsed in many fields of thought, and, to my shame be it said, I can only echo the words of Omar Khayyám: "I came out where I went in." What I have chiefly accumulated has been a large quantity of useful darkness.

Thought I hold to be sacred. There is far too little of it in the workaday world. We find a plenitude of manufactured prose—a thing that I have come to loathe. As Mr. Bernard Shaw has said quite recently, "any fool can write." Allowing for the usual Shavian emphasis, this is a sentiment that all must admit. Most people reproduce on paper just what they have learnt to write. It is an automatic and purposeless repetition of words—a babblement—a simple case of echolalia.

Thought is intrinsically an exploration—which no amount of mechanical learning can replace. The only Western spirits to whom I can avow deep obligations are, in the imaginative sphere, Shakespeare and Goethe, and, in the world of thought, Locke and Schopenhauer. In the East I am indebted to the Vedas and, in different ways, to Buddha, Sankara,

Chuang Tzŭ, some of the mystic poets of Persia, the Sufis, and to the poet of the "Rubáiyát," and Rama-krishna. If I do not quote them frequently, it is because their thought has become one with mine. Much that I have to say in the following pages has been culled, whether consciously or unconsciously, from these masters. But I have eschewed all slavish copying. Quite early in my academic career I came to see the wisdom of Kant's remark. "Philosophy," he said, "unless it be in an historical manner, cannot be learned: we can at most learn to *philosophize*."<sup>1</sup> These pregnant words I have never forgotten.

Nevertheless, though I have admitted my indebtedness to others, I must frankly confess that the Hindu view of life appears to me as defective as that of the Christians. Indeed, any finalistic attitude is called upon to transcend both East and West. Christ's theory of life, for instance, seems to me altogether incomplete: it misapprehends the cosmic intention. It represents the riddle of existence by a double fiction: the Creator and the Creation. And the whole scheme is constructed on the basis of these fictions. As to the life of Christ Himself, this calls for nothing but homage. We find it to have been perfectly selfless. So far as the dying for others is concerned, many a soldier on the battlefield has done more than Christ. It is the personal tragedy of a heroic spirit that attracts me. Whether the orthodox call my view perverse, or not, matters little or

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, Meiklejohn's trans., p. 507.

nothing to me. I can only testify according to the leadings of my own soul.

*Per contra*, Buddha's theory of life seems equally incomplete. Needless to say, the Creator and the Creation are definitely and emphatically ignored. The cup of life, if it overflows, seems to run to waste; but if it is inverted, there is no replenishment. Sakya-Muni denies the need of any replenishment: he denies that the needs of thirst are met by any deeper draughts of salt water. We can only accept or reject his teaching: the decision, in any case, is temperamental.

For myself, I conceive of life as an interminable adventure in which all that comes is welcome to the free spirit. Sorrow and joy are alike indifferent—they are the two most popular ways of receiving experience.

On the whole, the emotional undertone of the Eastern consciousness is sombre: existence is taken to be something to tolerate, not to rejoice in; contrariwise, the emotional undertone of the Western consciousness is a gay light-heartedness: existence is made an occasion for rejoicing—in and for itself. That both these attitudes are but partial attitudes needs no pointing out. Their mutual contradiction, *qua* attitudes, is too obvious for further comment. Perhaps it is this that goes far to separate East and West. To use the words of Othello,

Nay, that's certain: but yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

A fuller and completer way of regarding experience may possibly bring about some sort of eirenicon between the contending sects. That such an eirenicon may be arrived at, whether by the pathway of the child or the mystic, is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The essays that follow are framed with such an intention. Any contradictions that may appear are suitably inevitable.



## A THEORY OF POETRY

To dissect or analyse a rose tells us little of the queen of flowers. All its mystery is left untouched. We know that this is mere *knowledge about* and not *knowledge of acquaintance*. The *essence* of a rose—that which makes it what it is—will not yield up its secret to botanist or chemist as such. Devam bhutva, devam yajet <sup>1</sup> (to worship the god become the god). That is to say, that which remains for us as only object, remains unknown. Only to an artist is it given to recognize it; for, ultimately, a rose is but a creation of his own soul. “All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth,” says Bishop Berkeley, “in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without the mind. . . . So long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of Some Eternal Spirit.” <sup>2</sup> James Hinton means the same thing when he says: “To comprehend anything is to have it in

<sup>1</sup> A Sanskrit saying.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge.*

us . . . In short, we know a thing only when we see that it is merely a form of our thought." <sup>1</sup> This is precisely the teaching of Zen Buddhism. Art is a kind of Zen (the Hindu would say "Yoga"), "a delving down into the Buddha that each of us unknowingly carries within him, as Benjamin carried Joseph's cup in his sack. Through Zen we annihilate Time and see the universe not split up into myriad fragments, but in its primal unity. Unless, says the Zen aesthetician, the artist's work is imbued with this vision of the subjective, non-phenomenal aspect of life, his productions will be mere toys." <sup>2</sup> Thus, free spirit calls to free spirit across millenniums. <sup>3</sup>

The rose is, then, what the artist is obliged by divine compulsion to put into it.

Such is poetry. We have only to compare the various definitions that have been put forward. Wordsworth refers to poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." <sup>4</sup> Some may object to this,

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Waley, *Zen Buddhism and Its Relation to Art*.

<sup>3</sup> The Realists disagree with this view. According to them, a thing is what it is known as—a reality independent of the existence of a perceiving consciousness. Now, a thing is, or exists, only in so far as I have established a *personal contact* with it. The moment I am gone, the relation ceases, and the question of existence or non-existence does not arise. The world, as Schopenhauer said, is but an object in relation to a subject. What it is by itself we have no means of knowing. Even science, which aims at de-personalization, remains anthropomorphic.

<sup>4</sup> Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

though beautifully put, because for one reason it is figurative, and secondly, because it is an ascription of degree. Carlyle's suggestion that it is "musical thought,"<sup>1</sup> makes pleasant appeal to our sympathies, but seems a misapplication of the term "thought." Many of the songs of Shakespeare, Shelley, and Swinburne may be enjoyed without specially dwelling on their meaning. Carlyle's contribution is not, strictly speaking, a definition at all. Examining numerous other proposals in turn, we remain dissatisfied. They fail to throw light on our subject. Even Professor A. E. Housman leaves the main issue untouched.<sup>2</sup> He tells us *how* he produces poetry, not *what* it is. The fact is, each propounder of a definition has been insistent on some aspect in which he is particularly interested: indeed, each has been talking about a different thing. Hence the appearance of confusions. Of course every writer is entitled to mark out his subject-matter in any way he chooses.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view all definitions are worthy of respectful consideration. Although the voices may be different, there need be no antagonism.

Perhaps I may crave admission in this domain, on the ground that I have the honour to represent an Oriental mentality. Hence, possibly, I may be able to throw some fresh light on the subject.

It will clear the ground if we examine the current

<sup>1</sup> *The Hero as Poet.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Name and Nature of Poetry.*

<sup>3</sup> See Mill, *System of Logic*, p. 2.

distinction between poetry and prose, on which some critics lay great stress. Dryden insists that we have here a valid critical difference.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth develops a similar notion, but shifts the venue.<sup>2</sup> Pater also shows a penchant for the poetry-versus-prose controversy. "It is surely the stupidest of losses," he writes, "to confuse things which right reason has put asunder, to lose the sense of achieved distinctions between poetry and prose, for instance, or, to speak more exactly, between the laws and characteristic excellences of verse and prose composition."<sup>3</sup>

Now two questions arise:

1. How far are these distinctions justifiable?
2. Are they vitally relevant?

Speaking for myself, I do not regard the distinctions as either justifiable or deeply relevant. Who is to determine the limits of either? The difference between prose and poetry seems arbitrary and artificial—in fact, what is called in logic a cross-division—like a classification of animals into marine, vertebrate and warm-blooded.

A few concrete illustrations will explain our point more clearly.

It has snowed all night. I have been to look at our primroses; each of them had its small load of snow, and was bowing its head under its burden. These pretty flowers, with their rich yellow colour, had a charming effect under

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

<sup>3</sup> See the essay on "Style" in *Appreciations*, p. 1.

their white hoods. I saw whole tufts of them roofed over by a single block of snow; all these laughing flowers thus shrouded and leaning one upon another, made me think of a group of young girls surprised by a wave and sheltering under a white cloth.<sup>1</sup>

It was the time when England's queen  
Twelve years had reigned, a sovereign dread;  
Nor yet the restless crown had been  
Disturbed upon her virgin head;  
But now the inly working north  
Was ripe to send its thousands forth,  
A potent vassalage, to fight  
In Percy's and in Neville's right,  
Two earls fast leagued in discontent,  
Who gave their wishes open vent;  
And boldly urged a general plea,  
The rites of ancient piety  
To be triumphantly restored,  
By the dread justice of the sword!  
And the same banner, on whose breast  
The blameless lady had exprest  
Memorials chosen to give life  
And sunshine to a dangerous strife;  
That banner, waiting for the call,  
Stood quietly in Rylstone Hall.<sup>2</sup>

Which of these two extracts shall we call poetry? For it is an enormous responsibility to impose names, and one that cannot weigh too heavily on the literary conscience. The layman in literature would not hesi-

<sup>1</sup> Maurice de Guérin, quoted by Matthew Arnold in his *Essays in Criticism*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth, "The White Doe of Rylstone; or, The Fate of the Nortons," Canto II.

tate to call the former prose, and the latter poetry. Yet the very qualities that strike us in Guérin, impress us by their total absence in Wordsworth.

Let us take two more passages for comparison :

And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.<sup>1</sup>

Let a great assembly be  
Of the fearless, of the free,  
On some spot of English ground,  
Where the plains stretch wide around.<sup>2</sup>

Here, again, our fundamental question recurs. And here again it is far more than a matter of mere naming; it is a matter concerning intrinsic qualities and values. The second passage quoted is seen to be the falsest and most commonplace fustian. The first is a vision, vibrant and flaming, fraught with universal destiny. And, what matters most, it is a creation—whether of the speaker or of his inspirer matters little.

Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely to exemplify the popular distinction between poetry and prose. But what sort of test is popularity? Without undue lack of respect we can at least charge it with a certain limitation. Nothing is more characteristic of childhood than its naïve acceptance of valuations. It would seem that if we equate a popu-

<sup>1</sup> The book of the Prophet Ezekiel, i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy*, lxxv.

lar apprehension with the acceptances of childhood, we are doing all that the duty of human charity demands.

Between prose and verse the distinction is almost too obvious to formulate. Verse has all the functions of prose and more. It appeals to, and enlists in its service, the divine minstrelsy that we call music. We may call the difference merely technical.

When we come to poetry we are on a ground that has nothing whatever to do with all that precedes. In itself poetry is the interpretation of Nature by the intuition of Beauty, and technical form is irrelevant and even intrusive. The vehicle, whether prose or verse, is as unimportant as the ink in which the composition is printed. The Hindus never made a mistake in this matter. They knew that metre was not what made poetry; <sup>1</sup> for their driest treatises on logic and medicine are composed in metre. For them metrical poetry is *padya kāvya*, prose poetry is *gadya kāvya*; but it is *rasa* (Beauty or Æsthetic Emotion in the strict sense of the philosopher) that makes them poetry. <sup>2</sup>

We are now forced to the conclusion that the fundamental antithesis is between poetry and non-poetry,

<sup>1</sup> To the Hindu it is amusing to find Hegel saying that "metre is the first and only condition absolutely demanded by poetry, yea even more necessary than a figurative picturesque diction." (*Æsthetik*, iii, p. 289.)

<sup>2</sup> Earlier and later scholars find the germ of this theory in Valmiki; but it is Bharata who develops and completes it in his *Nāṭya-Sāstra*.



in which saying we are almost quoting the words of Benedetto Croce. "Among the many kinds and varieties of literature," he says, "is one which would be well defined by means of a verbal paradox, as *prosaic poetry*. It is not, as might be supposed, poetry that is a failure, but a thing of itself, having its own value, and called poetry solely because it assumes metrical form, whereas in reality it is prose. Metrical form is indeed suitable and natural to it, but here it does not fulfil the same office as in true and proper poetry, affording a new proof that the presence or absence of the verse (as indeed of every other characteristic taken in a material sense) does not give a sure indication of poetry."<sup>1</sup>

Having cleared away certain irrelevancies, we are in a better position to pursue our inquiry—What is poetry?

We have already shadowed forth the suggestion that poetry is the interpretation of Nature by the intuition of Beauty. This is the power of seeing the unseen. Let us call it a creative vision. Poetry, now, may be defined as the expression of a creative vision and of the feelings that associate themselves with it—needless to say, the expression in words. Two things, then, are needed for the making of a true poem: firstly, a creative vision; secondly, the expression of this vision in words charged with fire.

<sup>1</sup> *European Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Douglas Ainslie, p. 182.



To consider the second gift in the first place. Initially, words are mere sounds, destitute of significance. In the passage of time they become definitely expressive and symbolic and saturated with associations. It is essentially by the use of these associations that the poet manifests the magic of his craft. Professor Whitehead, however, remarks: "A certain type of minor intellect is always worrying itself and others by discussion as to the applicability of technical terms. Are the incommensurable numbers properly called numbers? . . . Are the imaginary numbers imaginary, and are they numbers?—are types of such futile questions. Now it cannot be too clearly understood that, in science, technical terms are names arbitrarily assigned, like Christian names to children. There can be no question of the names being right or wrong. They may be judicious or injudicious; for they can sometimes be so arranged" (assigned?) "as to be easy to remember, or so as to suggest relevant and important ideas. The essential principle involved was quite clearly enunciated in Wonderland to Alice by Humpty Dumpty when he told her, à propos of his use of words, 'I pay them extra and make them mean what I like.'" <sup>1</sup>

Now with all deference to the gifted thinker here quoted, it is borne in on me that the matter of names and naming is not quite so simple. "There can be no question," we are told, "of the names being right

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Mathematics*, p. 87 f.

or wrong. They may be judicious or injudicious." Thus if a girl child is christened "Habakkuk" there is nothing wrong about the name, and perhaps we ought to hesitate even to call it "injudicious." For it is a distinctive label, and henceforth we know what it stands for. What does it matter that anyone not specially informed would think of the unfortunate infant as a male, or that in any case it has been socially maimed for life?

Professor Whitehead is altogether oblivious of the ethics of naming. We are certainly at liberty to neglect all the associations of words, but it is at the risk of great inconvenience and the incessant danger of misunderstanding. Now what is a mere inconvenience in technical writings, becomes a serious offence (this is no exaggeration) in literature and an unpardonable sin in poetic diction. Words are like the stones of an ancient church. To a sympathetic soul, the fabric itself is redolent of the ages of faith; and the silence of the empty building is more eloquent than the utterance of any human voice. Of such a kind is the magic of words. They are to the poet what fossils are to the man of science. But while the scientist cannot call to life the specimens he contemplates, at the touch of the poet words burst forth into a thousand melodies.

But if we ponder the magic of words in poetry, where can we ponder it more than in the homeland of all occult power—Magic itself. Here the power of words is omnipotent. To say that it is miracle-

working, would be to underestimate it. It is the open sesame to every treasure-house. It is well for us to linger over the strange potency of mere words. In Egypt the formula of words was as essential as the gesture and the manipulation of materials. In India even up to the present day the power of *mantras* is undisputed. "The universe is under the power of the gods; the gods are under the power of the *mantrams*; the *mantrams* are under the power of the Brahmins; therefore the Brahmins are our gods."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the *Athārvaveda* is mostly a collection of metrical spells. Here is an example:

To those weapons of thine, O Death, be homage; homage to thy benediction, homage to thy malediction; homage to thy favour, O Death; this homage to thy disfavour.<sup>2</sup>

That certain formulæ possessed particular efficacy has been recognized by almost all peoples. Doubtless the reader is familiar with the abracadabra of the Jewish race; but less familiar are the Egyptian words "Protection behind, a protection that comes, a protection!"<sup>3</sup> The pious Muhammadan rarely undertakes anything without muttering the word "Bismillāh"; and the Hindu has his "om." The present writer when a child was helped by his grandmother to overcome his fear of darkness. "You have only to recite 'om, shri om,'" she said, "and no harm can come

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, *Hindu Manners and Customs*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Athārvaveda*, VI. xiii, 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Zaubersprüche*, recto 9, 2.

to you." These few syllables brought infinite balm to the child's soul.

We now see something of the potency of mere words. This leads us to strange surmises as to the meaning and origin of language. Perhaps language is but a repercussion of mystic yearnings in our souls. It has not been consciously manufactured. As the Duke of Argyll said: "It has grown up or been developed out of the intuitive interpretations of the human spirit in its contact with, and observations of, the external and of the internal world."<sup>1</sup> Language, then, is a glow of the fire within us. The Egyptians were very, very sure of this. According to them, language is no mere tinkling of cymbals, but an objectivation of things apprehended. Thus the music of words is half their meaning, or more.

If we seek the value of Horace, let us remember that many a scholar in lonely places, it may be on the frontier of the British Empire, has found his consolation and inspiration in these Latin Odes. Yet, the thought of the Odes is far removed from what we should call sublime. Horace never sought the heights of divine theoria. Nevertheless, who can resist the magic of such lines as these:

O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro,  
Dulci digne mero non sine floribus,  
Cras donaberis haedo,  
Cui frons turgida cornibus

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<sup>1</sup> *What is Science?*, p. 50.

Primis et Venerem et proelia destinat.  
Frustra : nam gelidos inficiet tibi  
Rubro sanguine rivos  
Lascivi suboles gregis.

Te fragrantis atrox hora Caniculae  
Nescit tangere, tu frigus amabile  
Fessis vomere tauris  
Praebes et pecori vago.

Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium,  
Me discente cavis inportam dicem  
Saxis, unde loquaces  
Lymphae desiliunt tuae.<sup>1</sup>

Or these :

O Venus, regina Cnidi Paphisque,  
Sperne dilectum Cyprum et vocantis  
Ture te multo Glyceræ decorem  
Transfer in aedem.

---

<sup>1</sup> Book III, 13.

(Oh sparkling fountain ! ay brighter than brighter gold,  
Worthy at once of flowers and sweetest wine,  
To-morrow shall a kid be offered thee  
Upon whose budding brow the young horns shine—  
Promise alike of Love and battle free—  
A promise vain ! For sure with blood-red glow  
That nursling of the wanton flock, to honour thee  
Shall dye thy waters with their icy flow.  
No flaming Dogstar thy cool stream corrupts,  
As to the oxen wearied in the field  
And to the wandering herd of sheep and goats,  
The cool stream they love, thy waters yield.  
Thou too, among the founts of high renown  
Shall take thy place, when oft my songs recall  
Thy hoary oaks, perched on the hollow crags,  
From whence thy even babbling waters fall.)

Fervidus tecum puer et solutis  
Gratiae zonis properentque Nymphae  
Et parum comis sine te Juventas  
Mercuriusque.<sup>1</sup>

We may well ask, What keeps such poetry alive? There is only one answer. It is the haunting music of the words, joined with their perfect adequacy. Nietzsche has expressed his admiration of Horace in the following terms. "Up to the present," he says, "no poet has given me the same artistic raptures as those which from the first I received from an Horatian Ode. In certain languages it would be absurd even to aspire to what is accomplished by this poet. This mosaic of words, in which every unit spreads its power to the left and to the right over the whole, by its sound, by its place in the sentence, and by its meaning, this *minimum* in compass and number of the signs and the *maximum* of energy in the signs which is thereby achieved—all this is Roman *par excellence*. By the side of this all the rest of poetry becomes something popular—nothing more than senseless sentimental twaddle."<sup>2</sup> This eulogy is

<sup>1</sup> Book I, 30.

(Venus, queen of Cnidos and Paphos, desert thy beloved Cyprus, and change thy dwelling to Glycera's shrine, who invites thee with a wealth of incense.

With thee the glowing boy, and the Graces with zone unloosed, and the Nymphs, haste hither, and Youth who without thee is not winning, and Mercury.)

<sup>2</sup> *The Twilight of the Idols*, p. 113.

true enough in the main, but, notwithstanding Nietzsche, Horace is not one of our supreme poets. The gods did not give him gifts with both hands.

The same, from a different point of view, is true of Milton. His glory lies in his diction. In his work, words, over and above their dictionary signification, connote all the feeling which has gathered round them by reason of their employment through a hundred generations of song. In the words of Mr. Myers, "without ceasing to be a logical step in the argument, a phrase becomes a centre of emotional force. The complex associations evoked by other words in the same passage, in a way distinct from logical or grammatical connection." For the purpose of poetry a thought is the representative of many feelings, and a word is the representative of many thoughts. A single word may thus set in motion in us the vibration of a feeling first consigned to letters 3,000 years ago. For poetry words should be freighted with associations of feeling, that they may awaken sympathy. It is the suggestive power of words that the poet cares for, rather than their current denotation. Here lies the secret of Milton's appeal.

Turning to Japanese poetry, critics, familiar with the language in which it is written, assure us of its musical quality. Little of this can reach us through the medium of an alien tongue, "car," as Professor Emile Legouis has said, "*une traduction n'est jamais qu'un pis aller*"; but some glimpse can be obtained



even from an English version. I give two short examples, swallow-flights of song :

'Tis spring, and the mists come stealing  
O'er Suminoye's shore,  
And I stand by the seaside musing  
On the days that are no more.

Shame and despair are mine from day to day  
But, being no bird, I cannot fly away.

The same melodic gift is shown in the Sonnets of Rossetti, as also in Shelley and the divine lyrics of Shakespeare. But all this, in and by itself, is not the making of supreme poetry. "One thing is needful"—the creative vision.

But what do we mean by the creative vision? At least this much—the ambit of the poet's spiritual adventure. Now this ambit is a spacious one, for it includes all that the poet has done and been and all that he aspires to—in fact, his whole *ambition*, the word taken in its French sense.

We are now led to inquire into the storehouse from which the artist draws his materials. This includes his entire experience, both conscious and unconscious. In fact nothing that psycho-analysis would include within its purview is excluded. Who can tell what hidden springs are welling up when the poet is visited by the muses? Heredity, environment (past and present), whether consciously or unconsciously accepted, the suggestions of a present scene or sound, and a multitude of other stimuli—all these meet and mingle and voice themselves in the poet's work.



It might seemingly be said that the artist's universe is distinguishable into the Self and the Not-Self.<sup>1</sup> Yet this is but popular philosophy. "Ich ist Alles," says Fichte. "Alles ist ich," says Schelling. Thus whatever the poet expresses is in terms of himself. Perhaps it is profitable to call to mind Einstein's characterization of the physical universe—"finite but unbounded." Such is the artist's universe.

Poets differ from one another in the size of their universe. Thus Cowper's universe is microscopic as compared with Chaucer's, and Chaucer's small as compared with Shakespeare's. But it is not only the extent that matters, but the richness, salubrity (for example, the universe of Dostoievsky is like a vast hospital), spiritual atmosphere, and, last but not least, some outposts whence one can see horizons opening on horizons. The greater poet differs from the lesser in all these qualities: in other words, in the scope and quality of his creative vision.

It is clear that the art of the poet has two functions: to receive and to give. What he shall receive is a gift of the gods, who grant him eyes to see the vision and ears attuned to the celestial voices. "Sometimes," said Philo, "when I have come to my work empty, I have suddenly become full; ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me, and implanted in me from on high; so that through the influence of divine inspiration, I have become greatly excited, and have known neither the place in which

<sup>1</sup> I have often wondered which is which.

I was, nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what I was writing; for then I have been conscious of a richness of interpretation, an enjoyment of light, a most penetrating insight, a most manifest energy in all that was done; having such an effect on my mind as the clearest ocular demonstration would have on the eye."<sup>1</sup> "I have noticed," said Raphael to Leonardo da Vinci, "that when one paints one should think of nothing: everything then comes better."<sup>2</sup> In art, then, as in every other human activity, Wordsworth's maxim holds good,

We can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.<sup>3</sup>

But it is possible to exaggerate the negative element. "The distinguishing-mark of the genuine artist," says Dr. Ralph Sockman, "is that he is trying to express something through himself rather than trying to express himself through something." But, as Mr. Cranmer-Byng has well pointed out, we may go beyond this "and say that the artist does not merely express something *through* himself but something of himself as well."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Art is the evolved play

<sup>1</sup> *The Prophetic Spirit in Genius and Madness*, by Clissold, p. 67; also quoted by William James in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> Merejkowsky, *Le roman de Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Expostulation and Reply*, 23 f.

<sup>4</sup> For a deeper exposition of the problem see *The Vision of Asia*.

of Mind and mind—the impinging of the Infinite upon the finite consciousness.

But what the poet shall give, and how he shall give—these are conditioned by the age he lives in and the culture he has imbibed. Everything he utters has of necessity a local name and a habitation. In this sense, and in this only, poetry is *truth refined*.

It is now time to gather up the various threads and look for a synthesis. Poetry, viewed in all its *envergyure*, may be defined as *the communication of a creative vision in significant symbols*.

This is an entirely personal view, as, indeed, it should be. After all, as we said at the outset of our inquiry, poetry is the mirrored image of our own thought and feeling. We have come back to the point whence we started. We always do.

Of course to some poetry is a mere tinkling of cymbals; to others it is a vision of Reality. This is clearly seen when we compare the modes in which Mr. I. A. Richards<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Middleton Murry<sup>2</sup> envisage the term and all that it connotes. These writers only confirm the view of poetry that we have ourselves maintained in this discussion. We are reminded of the Saiva invocation:

Thou dost take the forms imagined by thy worshippers.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Science and Poetry*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Essay entitled “The Nature of Poetry” in *Discoveries*.

## IN COMMUNION WITH THE SPHINX

MAN is undoubtedly a very recent arrival on our globe, although it is more than a million years ago that we can place his departure from an anthropoid status early in the Miocene period.<sup>1</sup> His ancestry is one of the most obscure of problems.<sup>2</sup> The written records that we possess are but things of yesterday. Yet, as far back as we can trace these human documents, we find manifested the same restless spirit of inquiry that we know to-day.<sup>3</sup> Man has always been

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Arthur Keith, *The Antiquity of Man*; Carveth Read, *The Origin of Man and of his Superstitions*; J. Arthur Thomson, *The Outline of History*; Harold Peake and Herbert J. Fleure, *The Corridors of Time*, Vol. I, II, III.

<sup>2</sup> Darwin, in his *Descent of Man*, thought it probable that man and the African anthropoid were co-descendants of a common anthropoid which had its habitat in Africa. But, in charting the family tree of the Higher Primates, modern authorities (Professor Eugène Dubois and Professor Elliot Smith) differ as to the position which should be assigned to man.

<sup>3</sup> "At any early period of history," says Whewell, "there appeared in men a propensity to pursue speculative inquiries concerning the various parts and properties of the material world. What they saw excited them to meditate, to conjecture, and to reason: they endeavoured to account for natural events, to trace their courses, to reduce them to their principles." (*History of the Inductive Sciences*, Vol. I, p. 19.)

perplexed, until he has found an answer that brings him satisfaction. That Protean goddess, the Sphinx, dwells for ever in the spirit of man—now wrapt in slumber, now flamingly alive.

Yet, as a visible presence, it is the youngest born of Time. Its first home, as far as we know, was on the banks of the Nile.<sup>1</sup> Here, long before Menes,<sup>2</sup> she reigned solitary over the burning sands. The silence was broken only by the passing caravans. For æons no voice spoke to the waiting world.<sup>3</sup>

Then the spirit of thought moved over the waste; and the mystic figure under the silent stars began its eternal questionings.

Next we find it, somewhat transformed, in ancient Greece.<sup>4</sup> Here it is a female monster, a rapacious

<sup>1</sup> See W. M. F. Petrie, *History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the XVth Dynasty*, p. 51; Prisse d'Avennes, *Histoire de l'art égyptien* (Paris, 1878), Vol. II, pp. 405, 410.

<sup>2</sup> First legendary king of Egypt.

<sup>3</sup> "The Egyptian sphinx," Wilkinson tells us, "was usually an emblematic figure, representative of the king, and may be considered, when with the head of man and the body of lion, as the union of intellect and physical force." (*The Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. I, p. 226.)

<sup>4</sup> First mentioned by Hesiod (*Theog.* 326), who calls her the daughter of Orthus and Chimæra. According to Apollonius (*III.* 5, 8), she was the daughter of Typhon and Echidna, and had the face of a woman, the feet and tail of a lion and the wings of a bird. Herodotus distinguishes the male sphinx of Egypt as "androsphinx."

setter of problems, devouring the daring visitant who was too witless to yield up an answer. The legend tells us that Œdipus alone survived the ordeal, whereupon she compassed her own end.<sup>1</sup>

For centuries she was lost sight of, although she wandered as a phantom among men.<sup>2</sup> At last we see her as a figure of transcendent hope and power—the divinity that we call Science.<sup>3</sup> To this figure homage is paid by poets and men of science alike. Her altars rise day by day in different corners of the globe “comme les mille flambeaux d’une fête sans fin.”

Even in the brief space of human acquaintance,<sup>4</sup> her old Protean character attaches to her. The

<sup>1</sup> See Milchhofer, in *Mitth. d. deutsh. archaol.*, Instit. in Athen (1879), p. 46 f.; J. Ilberg, *Die sphinx in der griechischen Sage und Kunst* (1895); Sir R. C. Jebb's ed. of *Sophocles Oed. Tyrann.*, App., note 12.

<sup>2</sup> We find specimens of the sphinx in all parts of the world—in Asia Minor, in Cyprus, and in Persia. Among the remains of the Mayan culture in Yucatan are found examples of sphinxes, male and female, which are not unlike those of Egypt and Greece.

<sup>3</sup> “What is the Sphinx?” asks Dr. Brandes. “What else than the gloomy riddle that is chained to earth, the eternal question—brooding science!” (*Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 264.)

<sup>4</sup> “Science and the eye,” says Professor J. Arthur Thomson, “must be regarded as the results of long processes of evolution, vastly older than man. . . . Science has its roots in pre-human capacities of ‘learning,’ of intelligently profiting by experience.”

problems of one age were never those of another.<sup>1</sup> No one would dare to formulate the future forms of her inquiries. No human brain can compass even a minimal fraction of the problems that lie before us. To each of us is vouchsafed only a passing glimpse of some special aspect of the totality. To such a passing glimpse I confine myself in what follows.

When we speak of this or that "science," we may mean either of two distinct things: (1) an ideal body of knowledge, or (2) an actual achievement in knowledge—that is, a body of knowledge accessible in treatises and text-books.

A science in the first sense is conceived, more or less obscurely, as the answer to some very general problem. If we are wise, we shall regard any formulation of this problem as merely tentative and provisional. Abundant references to this, dwelling on the fact that the proper definition of a science is a consummation of knowledge and is never available as a "terminus a quo," will be found in the literature

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars are fond of quoting Empedocles and Pythagoras to support their views, quite forgetting that the Greeks were not handling our problems: at least, they assigned a different meaning to their problems.

By the study of "Origins" I mean the study of the earliest stages or phases of conceptions that have subsequently attained the grade of intellectual "Orthodoxy." Such studies are of service (for the "natural history" of human thought) because they show that an orthodoxy is itself but a passing phase or stage of thought. It is simply a provisional adaptation of thought to experience.



of philosophy. "It is important," says Kant, "that, only after having occupied ourselves for a long time in the collection of materials, under the guidance of an idea which lies undeveloped in the mind, but not according to any definite plan of arrangement, nay, only after we have spent much time and labour in the technical disposition of our materials, does it become possible to view the idea of science in a clear light, and to project, according to architectonical principles, a plan of the whole, in accordance with the aims of reason."<sup>1</sup>

A science in the second sense is an actual and accessible product of human inquiry. It is in this sense that a writer says "we know from psychology that," or "geology teaches us that," and so on. (Incidentally, I object altogether to this mode of reference, as a quite unnecessary ascription of infallibility. "Psychologists, or geologists, hold, or maintain, or teach, this or that," is a sufficient reference to the best opinion available.)

Now a science as intended in sense (2) being a human product, has a history—a history that throws light on the nature of the product. For one thing, this product is manifestly incomplete. We see it in the actual procedure of extending its boundaries, perpetually adding new and kindred facts to those already included. Further, we find it undergoing a variety of internal changes—changes that we may

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by J. M. D. Meiklejohn, p. 505.



roughly summarize as new ways of regarding its facts. The essential incompleteness of any science is most clearly realized, of course, by those workers who have reached the frontier, and who know, by personal experience, what research means.

The idea of science as indefinitely progressive seems to be comparatively modern.<sup>1</sup> Our forefathers lived in a smaller world than ours. There seems to have been a tacit assumption that reality, apart from the mysteries of religion, was a fairly simple matter. And, except here and there,<sup>2</sup> we seem to find a kind of intellectual complacency<sup>3</sup> that is now impossible except among the young and half-educated.

As I read the situation—that is, the historic fact—the influence of religion is traceable here. It befogged even the so-called intellectuals.<sup>4</sup> We must remember that our forefathers viewed the world as a transitory scene, a mere half-way house, created by divine providence with no other object. It did

<sup>1</sup> See *Principles of Science*, by Jevons.

<sup>2</sup> Plato looked forward to much progress in geometry, (Rep. vii). It may be safely stated that Mathematics itself is in its infancy.

<sup>3</sup> Cowper, and so his biographer after him, protested against a meteorology which explained weather portents without recognizing the intervention of God. See *Grimshaw*, ed. 1850, p. 134, note; and *Table Talk*; *The Progress of Error*; *Expostulation*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Cardinal Newman is a case in point; and so the famous headmaster of Rugby School, Dr. Arnold.

not seem probable, perhaps, that—to put the matter bluntly—providence had troubled to spend unnecessary care over the construction. So the world was not, after all, very complex or unintelligible. All that there was to be known or thought about was conceivably attainable and within easy reach. Their widest vision had a completeness that was entirely illusory.

Since then what a startling transvaluation has occurred! We are becoming increasingly humble. We realize that we are merely touching the fringe of totality. This consciousness should guard us against overweening confidence in our achievements and our powers.

It may be helpful to begin our inquiry by recalling what some well-known writers have advanced. "A science is," says Welton, "in all cases, a systematic body of knowledge relating to some particular subject-matter. Knowledge of isolated facts is not science—it can only become so when such isolated facts are brought under general laws forming part of a consistent whole. The subject-matter of each science is some definite part of the material of human knowledge; of Algebra it is the relations and properties of numbers, of Botany, vegetable life, and of Logic, thought."<sup>1</sup> "The classification of facts," says Karl Pearson, "the recognition of their sequence and relative significance is the function of science, and the habit of forming a judgment upon these facts un-

<sup>1</sup> *Manual of Logic*, Vol. I, pp. 10-11.

biased by personal feeling is characteristic of what may be termed the scientific mind." <sup>1</sup> "In short," writes J. A. Thomson, "it is the aim of science to describe the impersonal facts of experience in verifiable terms, as exactly as possible, as simply as possible, and as completely as possible. It is an intellectual construction—a working thought-model of the world. In its universe of discourse it keeps always to experiential terms or verifiable symbolical derivatives of these." <sup>2</sup> "The scientific inquirer," maintains Creighton, "is interested primarily in the results of his thinking: he is usually not interested in tracing the various steps through which his thought has passed, and the methods employed in reaching the goal. Oftentimes he would be unable to give any such description even if he tried to do so." <sup>3</sup> "Physicists," writes Jevons, "speak familiarly of Scientific Method, but they could not readily describe what they mean by that expression. Profoundly engaged in the study of particular classes of natural phenomena, they are usually too much engrossed in the immense and ever-accumulating details of their special sciences to generalize upon the methods of reasoning which they unconsciously employ." <sup>4</sup> "I have defined science," says the Duke of Argyll, "to be knowledge of things in their true relations to

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar of Science*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to Science*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *An Introductory Logic*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Science*, Preface.

each other, and to ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> “To get away from appearances, to read the physical fact behind the sensuous fact, is one chief aim of science.”<sup>2</sup> Trotter’s definition, however, seems to me the most comprehensive. Science is “a body of knowledge derived from experience of its material, and co-ordinated so that it shall be useful in forecasting and, if possible, directing the future behaviour of that material.”<sup>3</sup>

The workers in science, then, are intent on some theoretic scheme of the universe that will find in the chaos of human perceptions some sort of order. This aspiration is well envisaged by William James in his essay, *The Sentiment of Rationality*, which appears to me to include in its purview all that we call science.

As to the nature of science, we must beware of the haunting superstition that it is merely common sense. What we are saying is in direct opposition to a school of scientists that harps on the thesis of science being “organized common sense.”<sup>4</sup> This may be true to some extent in biology or in politics; but Aristotle, who was strong in these sciences, had no such com-

<sup>1</sup> *Science*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur J. Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> *Instincts of the Herd*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Professor P. G. Tait thinks that science aims at giving “a common-sense view of the world we live in.” We can only characterize this as exceedingly unsatisfactory. Even Huxley, to our regret, occasionally spoke as if he countenanced this view.

mon sense for physics. A couplet made up from Shakespeare runs :

'Tis science' glorious recompense  
To know things hid from common sense.<sup>1</sup>

This is far truer than the writer thought. For no real advance in positive knowledge has been made that did not directly antagonize the mental habits that preceded it. The path of science is strewn with the *dissecta membra* of Bacon's *Idola*. Perhaps the most striking illustration is found in very recent times in the revolutionary change that Hermann Minkowski's meditations have accomplished in our outlook on the very basic fabric of the conceptions of Time and Space. "From this time forth," he said, "space in itself and time in itself are to become mere shadows, and only a sort of union between the two is to preserve independence."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, our ideas have suffered

a sea change

Into something rich and strange.

That science is far from common sense is brought out by Einstein's remark that "Minkowski's thought is doubtless difficult of access to anyone inexperienced in mathematics."<sup>3</sup> And Einsteinism itself entails a complete uprooting of the conceptions that have formerly been held to lie inviolable at the foundations

<sup>1</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I, Sc. I, lines 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> Lecture delivered at Cologne, on September 21, 1908, at the 80th Conference of German scientists and medical men.

<sup>3</sup> *The Theory of Relativity*, Eng. trans. by Robert W. Lawson, p. 57.

of thought and experience.<sup>1</sup> "Our conception of the world," says Schmidt, "is shaken to its foundations; the belief in one unmoving absolute space, this boundless 'box' of æther, in which all that happens in the world has to take place, will have to go. We must also abandon the belief in an unchangeable true time, such as was ever accepted as the symbol of the flight of all phenomena. Distance in space, and duration in time, become meaningless conceptions, and the same holds with regard to the conceptions of rigid bodies and the simultaneity of two events. They all have to be relativized. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Science, in fact, is at every point corrective of common sense.

It is more akin to poetry, for both are fundamentally, not only expressions, but recreations of experience. In poetry, as in science, no beginning can be made without involving "a process of selection from the data of the personal thought-stream." In either case there is no escape from the shadow of the self. The mind of man is constitutive of the very phenomenon that is contemplated.

Nothing momentous can be achieved in either

<sup>1</sup> In popular references, as well as in certain representative writers, "Relativity" is employed as a collective term for the Doctrines of Einstein. I gather that in France (the country of Henri Poincaré) this identification of Relativity with Einsteinism is not as frequent as in Germany and England. For various reasons, I judge that in the interests of clear thinking the two terms should be kept apart.

<sup>2</sup> H. Schmidt, *Relativity and the Universe*, p. 84.

domain without some sort of imaginative "jump." Mere perseverance is not enough. "Bounded and conditioned by Co-operant Reason," says Tyndall, "imagination becomes the mightiest instrument of the physical discoverer. Newton's passage from a falling apple to a falling moon was, at the outset, a leap of the imagination."<sup>1</sup> The same "leap of the imagination" was necessary to create from a casual encounter with a provincial doctor the idea of "Nihilism" in *Fathers and Children*. It would be impossible to say whether Homer or Aristotle, Shakespeare or Galileo, Dostoevsky or Darwin were possessed of the greater imagination.

Surely it is an egregious error to put asunder what Nature has put together—for instance, the various faculties of man. The multitudinous expressions of the mind of man spring from the same emotions and are but variant responses to the same questionings. Science and poetry, philosophy and painting, ethics and architecture, mathematics and music are interlocked. The finest thought, for example, is only comparable to painting; and ethics is not unlike architecture. But let us linger a while over mathematics and music. It is sometimes asserted that there is a kinship between the mathematical and musical capacities—some sort of common origin, perhaps. I have a dim suspicion that this thought is not without foundation. But the question must needs be dealt with, in the first place, statistically. The

<sup>1</sup> *Fragments of Science*, p. 131.



following data may possibly be of interest to the reader :

W. F. DONKIN, Savilian Professor of Astronomy, Oxford. In the preface to Donkin's unpublished "Acoustics," Professor B. Price (writing about 1870) says of the work : "It was a work he was peculiarly qualified to undertake, being a mathematician of great attainments in the investigation and application of the higher theorems of analysis which are necessary for these subjects. He was, moreover, an accomplished musician, and had a profound theoretical knowledge of the Science of Music."

DESCARTES. Of his life in Paris (about 1617) Professor Mahaffy writes : "His tasks had undergone a solid change, and none of the distractions offered to him any charm, save music, which he studied attentively." His earliest treatise, now extant, is *On Music*. (See Mahaffy's *Descartes*, p. 19.)

KELVIN. He "was an active member, and later, during his residence at Cambridge, president of the . . . Cambridge University Musical Society. The musical instruments he most favoured were the cornet and especially the French horn—he was second horn in the original Peterhouse band." Thomson was one of the members. "At the Jubilee commemoration of the society, 1893, Lord Kelvin recalled that Mendelssohn, Weber, and Beethoven were the 'gods' of the infant association. Those of his pupils who came more intimately in contact with him will remem-



ber his keen admiration of these and other great composers, especially Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, and his delight in hearing their works. The Waldstein Sonata was a special favourite. It has been remarked before now, and it seems to be true, that the music of Bach and Beethoven has had special attractions for many great mathematicians." (A. Gray's *Lord Kelvin*, p. 23 f.)

CLIFFORD. An enthusiasm for music is clearly indicated in his letter to Lady Pollock.

EINSTEIN. In appearance, we are told, "he looks far more the musician than the man of science," while those who know him say that he is "essentially as much an artist as a discoverer." Improvisation on the piano, he himself says, is "a necessity of his life." His love of music, Havelock Ellis tells us, "is inborn; it developed when, as a child, he would think out little songs 'in praise of God,' and sing them by himself; music, Nature, and 'God' began, even at that early age, to become a kind of unity to him." (*The Dance of Life*, p. 123.)

Who can now deny that there is an intimate connection between music and mathematics?

The same is true of science and poetry. Wordsworth saw no antagonism between the two. "If the time should ever come," he said, "when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfigura-

tion, and will welcome the being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man." <sup>1</sup> This prophetic utterance seems to have borne fruit in the work of Tennyson. "It is an open secret to the few who know it, but a mystery and a stumbling-block to the many, that Science and Poetry are own sisters; insomuch that in those branches of scientific inquiry which are most abstract, most formal, and most remote from the grasp of the ordinary sensible imagination, a higher power of imagination akin to the creative insight of the poet is most needful and the most fruitful of lasting work. This living and constructive energy projects itself out into the world at the same time that it assimilates the surrounding world to itself." <sup>2</sup> The late Sir W. R. Hamilton was not indulging in a mere metaphor when he compared Langrange's great work to "a scientific poem."

Indeed, all knowledge is one: the various expressions of the spirit of man are not radically different, but branches from the same trunk. European thought has flourished by introducing "division of intellectual labour"; but, useful as the method is, it has its limitations. When all is said, the philosophy of the West remains confused and self-contradictory. The dream of unity remains an Eastern, especially a Chinese, ideal. <sup>3</sup>

The unlikeliest things are linked together. The

<sup>1</sup> Prefatory Observations to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir F. Pollock, *Biographical Notice of W. Kingdon Clifford*.

<sup>3</sup> L. Cranmer-Byng, *The Vision of Asia*, p. 61.

"meaningless," for instance, plays a singularly large part in discussion of private thought. I have never met with any adequate study of the phenomenon. But Poincaré's wise criticism is helpful.

The "universal expansion" that Poincaré invented (though only for his own demolition) is a good instance. I have come to the conclusion that the Lorentz contraction belongs to the same category.

In some way that I cannot yet divine, the topic of the "meaningless" seems to "link on" to Pragmatism.

The trouble is to understand how the meaningless, though in some sense a nullity, is yet so potent and holds us so tenaciously.

Anyway, in the primitive state of knowledge there were no artificial frontiers, cutting off one aspect of inquiry from another. At least the divorce between science and poetry, religion and philosophy, did not exist. Empedocles, Hesiod, and Lucretius sang their science. The writers of the Upanishads meditated on the religion of the Vedas. The *De Rerum Natura* reads like an ode to Epicurus, father of "the mighty Atom." . . .

But science has been expanding and deepening to an extent almost beyond belief. We are reminded of Bruno's words:

Now unconfined the wings stretch to heaven,  
Nor shrink beneath the crystal firmament—  
Aloft into the æther's fragrant deeps,  
Leaving below the earth-world with its pain  
And all the passions of mortality.

C.K.

D

This is a creative act. Does not the very word poetry itself mean creation?

"In the beginning," says the first of the Hebrew poets, "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." And light is the goal of the man of science. If this is not poetry, then what is poetry?

Further, the professed aim of the man of science is to transmute chaos into cosmos; and it does this by translating the crude materials of sensation and perception into an accepted scheme of concepts. The validity of these concepts is, and perhaps always will be, an arena of conflict. This consideration is sufficient in itself to exhibit their true status—that of poetry. And, in the last analysis, science is the very substance of poetry. Science is poetry "writ large." "We have found," says Eddington, "that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from Nature that which the mind has put into Nature."<sup>1</sup> Surely this is poetry.

Finally, let us linger for a moment over the fact that the Greek word *Poiesis* means a creation—anything made or done—a work, a piece of workmanship, a poetical work, a poem, an act, a deed. Now it happens that this is both poetry and science, and the distinction between the two is singularly factitious. James Hinton, a man of wide interests, saw no antag-

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Gravitation*, p. 20.

onism between the two. "Science," he said, "is poetry." Yet there is a difference, and this difference is specially seen in the privilege of selection—the selection out of the tumult of Experience. Poetry chooses the Beautiful; Science, on the other hand, is coldly impartial and everywhere fettered by the Actual. The difference, then, is essentially one of method. If we choose to worship, it seems that we are worshipping at different shrines of the same goddess.

## TRUTH AND REALITY

THE body of thought (analytic, speculative, and critical) known as the "Theory of Truth" or "Problem of Truth" involves two distinct but closely connected inquiries. These concern (a) the *nature* of truth, (b) the *tests* of truth, respectively. The former asks "What is truth?" or "What do we mean by truth?" The latter asks for criteria by which truths (true beliefs) can be discriminated from errors (false beliefs). "It is very important," says Bertrand Russell, "to keep these different questions entirely separate, since any confusion between them is sure to produce an answer which is not really applicable to either."<sup>1</sup>

For the élite Bertrand Russell is perhaps the most brilliant thinker to be found in Europe to-day. It is therefore as well to begin our inquiry by examining his solution of the problem that confronts us.

"There are three points to observe," we are told, "in the attempt to discover the nature of truth, three requisites which any theory must fulfil.

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 187 f.

"(1) Our theory of truth must be such as to admit of its opposite, falsehood.

"(2) It seems fairly obvious that if there were no beliefs there could be no falsehood, and no truth either, in the sense in which truth is co-relative to falsehood. . . . Truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements.

"(3) The truth or falsehood of a belief always depends upon something which lies outside the belief itself. . . . Although truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs, they are dependent upon the relations of the beliefs to other things, not upon any internal quality of the beliefs."

In amplification of the above :

(1) At this point I would enter a protest against the use of the term "falsehood" in this connection. We have already the terms "falsity" and "error." These are adequate, and contain no implication (as "falsehood" does) of an intention to deceive. But to continue (from Russell) the amplification of condition (1). "A good many philosophers have failed adequately to satisfy this condition : they have constructed theories according to which all our thinking ought to have been true, and have then had the greatest difficulty in finding a place for falsehood.

(2) "If we imagine a world of mere matter, there would be no room for falsehood in such a world, and although it would contain what may be called 'facts,' it would not contain any truths, in the sense in which truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and



statements : hence a world of mere matter, since it would contain no beliefs or statements, would also contain no truth or falsehood.

(3) " If I believe that Charles I. died on the scaffold, I believe truly, not because of any intrinsic quality of my belief, which could be discovered by merely examining the belief, but because of an historical event which happened two and a half centuries ago. If I believe that Charles I. died in his bed, I believe falsely : no degree of vividness in my belief, or of care in arriving at it, prevents it from being false, again because of what happened long ago, and not because of any intrinsic property of my belief." <sup>1</sup>

At this point let us pause to " take stock " of what we have done. Conditions (1) and (2) amount to a *convention* concerning this term " truth." Our procedure is, if anyone likes to call it so, an *arbitrarily constructive definition*. Perhaps *limitation* would be a better appellation, for the matter is still left very much " in the air." We agree that, whatever else it shall mean, this word " truth " shall at any rate stand for some sort of property of beliefs, and that it shall have an opposite (not merely a negative), and this opposite we agree to call " falsity." And further, seeking assertions that accommodate themselves as psychoses to the somewhat obscure psychosis labelled " truth," we agree that we are looking for something that is not discoverable in a belief itself, something that has reference (or relation) to some-

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter XII.

thing outside itself. This is the condition laid down in requirement (3). As regards the Charles I. illustration, we should all be willing, I suppose, to admit this as apposite. At the same time, if we have read a little about the "truth" problem, we should probably decline to admit that it is *coercingly* typical. The outside reference may be to "brute fact" or possibly the reference may take some other form.

To some minds it would be more satisfactory to consider the second topic in the first place, and then, having laid down such criteria, to declare—whatever conforms to these tests is what I mean by truth. The procedure is of course dogmatic; but it may be suggested that *any* procedure must of necessity be dogmatic. There is no escape from our own shadow.

According to the medieval conception, "truth is a harmony, an agreement, a correspondence between our thought and that which we think about." "*Veritas intellectus*," says Aquinas, "*est æquatio intellectus et rei, secundum quod intellectus dicit esse quod esse, vel non esse quod non est.*"<sup>1</sup> Here the test is the agreement between thought and its object. But in order to make use of this test of truth, we should need to get behind our own consciousness and be able to compare the object with the image, notion, or concept which we have of it in consciousness: but this is impossible. It is like aspiring to command a wider field of view by standing on our own shoulders. This historic as well as present-day popular concep-

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Hamilton, *Logic*.

tion is practically futile, because impracticable. It is strange that Bertrand Russell favours it.<sup>1</sup>

If the agreement theory fails because it is impracticable, we must seek a criterion without going beyond (outside of) the world of consciousness. The test, then, can be nothing else than the inner harmony and consistency of all thought and experience. This is known as the "coherence theory." Bertrand Russell has some objections against this ;<sup>2</sup> but then, as we have seen, the theory he prefers is more questionable still.

It will be recognized at once that there is very much in common experience to support the "coherence theory." It is by the test of consistency and coherence that we invariably judge the truth of evidence. Also it seems a very essential part of our intellectual nature to reject as untrue and false any statement or any idea that is self-contradictory or irreconcilable with the world of experience. But, then, on the other hand, we by no means allow that that must be true which does not exhibit logical contradiction and inconsistency. It is a common enough experience that ideas prove false though they have exhibited no inherent failure to harmonize with surrounding circumstances nor any self-contradiction. The theory, therefore, that truth is the inner harmony and consistency of all thought and experience, requires more than a cursory examination.

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 190 f.

If we cannot escape from the dream, we can at least (as Calderon desires in *Life a Dream*) "live well in the dream," which in this connection means, that we can always extend the sphere of our experience and thought and can establish a deeper and firmer connection between them. It is, without doubt, only the single and immediate phenomenon of our consciousness of which we have a direct and immediate certainty. Our knowledge must always, from the nature of the case, bear both in form and content the impress of our mind and be confined by its limitations. But this does not deprive knowledge of either its validity or its value. If there be a truth higher than that attainable by human knowledge, the truth known to us must be part of it. In availing ourselves of the means and the standard which are given us by the nature and the organization of our mind, we can therefore really advance in the knowledge of objective truth.<sup>1</sup>

There is much to commend the "coherence theory" of truth, but doubtless the ambit of speculation extends beyond this.

There is, for instance, the "pragmatist account of truth." Here "truth" is simply one kind of "biological value"—a belief which it is useful to hold for self-conservation or social conservation in the life of action.<sup>2</sup> According to this doctrine, the whole

<sup>1</sup> Based on Hoffding's *Outlines*.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Whittaker, *Prolegomena to a New Metaphysic*, p. 2.

"meaning" of a conception expresses itself in practical consequences, consequences either in the shape of conduct to be recommended, or in that of experience to be expected, if the conception be true; which consequences would be different if it were untrue, and must be different from the consequences by which the meaning of other conceptions is in turn expressed.

That this theory is imbued with a quaint Martin Tupperism cannot be denied: both Mr. Thomas Whittaker<sup>1</sup> and Professor G. E. Moore<sup>2</sup> have shown its inherent weakness. But William James, in trying to defend the theory, has made confusion worse confounded. In the preface to his *Pragmatism* he says: "Let me say that there is no logical connection between pragmatism, as I understand it, and a doctrine which I have recently set forth as 'radical empiricism.' The latter stands on its own feet. One may entirely reject it and still be a pragmatist." I find a difficulty here in the denial of "logical connection." If, as I understand, it is an essential position of radical empiricism to hold that no belief is incorrigible (that is, immune against revision), while pragmatism regards "truth" as perpetually "on the make," then it would seem that the two doctrines stand in alliance against all doctrines which assert that "immutable truth" is within human grasp.

In so far as pragmatism stands against absolute truth, there is much to commend it. It is then

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, Chapter I, "Is There a Theoretic Truth?"

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophical Essays*, Chapter on William James.

directly derivative from a famous saying of Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things." But this dictum is rarely properly understood. It means: each individual human being measures things in terms of himself, and thus there are as many truths as men. In the light of modern science, this seems a prophecy.

But I am afraid that this is not how the theory is understood. It is taken to mean "as a mode of business." It reduces "truth" to the "merely practical." In other words, it is *idealism on all fours*. The "meaningless" plays no part in its conspectus, though the "meaningless" permeates life and thought. And it may be said that *no meaning* can be attached to the behaviour of Nature. She seems to act like a capricious old aunt. It is hardly necessary to give examples of her manners and customs. About thought—let us refer to the invention of the symbol 0 and its function in the Arabic notation. "We can imagine," says Whitehead, "that when it had been introduced for this purpose, practical men, of the sort who dislike fanciful ideas, deprecated the silly habit of identifying it with a number zero. But they were wrong, as such men always are when they desert their proper function of masticating food which others have prepared."<sup>1</sup>

At this stage I venture to offer a theory of my own. I should formulate it thus:

We are familiar with the antithesis between "appearance" and "reality," as if these stood in

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Mathematics*, p. 65.



some intrinsic antagonism.<sup>1</sup> Surely this is shallow. The term "mere appearance" carries with it its own condemnation and rejection. And yet we recall Berkeley's immortal phrase, "*esse est percipi*"—to be is to be perceived. Tentatively, and if we accept the call to give a meaning to words, we are ultimately thrown back on the definition of truth as *appearance that stands the test*.

It is possible to be superstitious about truth, as about all other things. It is very likely that it is no awesome thing to be bowed down to and worshipped and spelt with a capital T. *There is a point of view from which it seems a mere accident*, dependent on human limitations—here to-day and gone to-morrow. Truth and falsehood are *human creations*: they are, simply because we have put them there. To universal Nature they are meaningless terms.

It appears to me that this so-called problem of truth has been grievously mishandled. It seems merely a problem of definition. If we define truth as *appearance that stands the test*, the whole conception stands revealed. There is of course the *further* problem of bringing forward real tests, and the progress of science has shown the way. It is merely a question of "*ars inveniendi*."

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Bradley, for instance, devoted a bulky volume to a discussion of this topic. In the end, after much expenditure of dialectical skill, he arrived at the conclusion that the supposed antagonism between "appearance" and "reality" is largely illusory.



The problem of Reality is a later inquiry than the problem of Truth. It must always be remembered that there are a number of questions that we delight in discussing that never presented themselves to the Greek thinkers. For instance, Greek has no word corresponding to our term "conscience,"<sup>1</sup> and accordingly many problems that have gathered round this familiar term could not occur to a philosopher of ancient Greece. The problem of reality seems hardly touched upon.

Before we proceed to discuss the nature of reality, we are called upon to face an initial difficulty: What is Experience? It seems a simple inquiry, but the student knows, or should know, that it involves enormous perplexities. This is clearly seen when we consult both popular and philosophical writers. Let us take a few illustrative quotations:

His years young, but his experience old.<sup>2</sup>

You are stricken in years, and have had great experience of the world.<sup>3</sup>

The word experience, in its etymological origin, is *experientia*—that is, practical acquaintance, efficiency, and skill, as the result of effort and trial . . . The ability to acquire experience is a true test of the presence of mental life.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *σέβας* in the *Orestes* of Euripides was taken by the later Greeks in that sense. I am indebted for this information to my friend Mr. Thomas Whittaker.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

<sup>3</sup> Steele, *Tatler*.

<sup>4</sup> Mellone and Drummond, *Logic*, p. 50 f.

The state of having been occupied in any department of study or practice, in affairs generally, or in the intercourse of life; the extent to which, or the length of time during which, one has been occupied; the aptitudes, skill, judgment, etc., thereby acquired.<sup>1</sup>

All our conceptions are what the Germans call *Denkmittel*, means by which we handle facts by thinking them. Experience merely as such doesn't come ticketed and labelled, we have first to discover what it is. Kant speaks of it as being in its first intention a "Gewühl der Erscheinungen" a "Rhapsodie der Wahrnehmungen," a mere motley which we have to unify by our wits. What we usually do is first to frame some system of concepts mentally classified, serialized, or connected in some intellectual way, and then to use this as a tally by which to "keep tab" on the impressions that present themselves. When each is referred to some possible place in the conceptual system, it is thereby "understood" . . . There are many conceptions of this sort; and the sense-manifold is also such a system.<sup>2</sup>

The word is used so vaguely and ambiguously by writers on philosophy that definition is difficult. We find, for instance, such writers as Royce and Bradley speaking of an "absolute experience" which is not subject to time conditions. This usage seems to deprive the term of all distinctive meaning. An experience in the historical and ordinary application of the term is a phase of conscious life which an individual "passes through" or "undergoes."<sup>3</sup>

We see that the term is much employed both by popular and philosophical writers, and beset with

<sup>1</sup> Murray's Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> G. F. Stout, *Manual of Psychology*.

ambiguities. No single precise definition is possible, and all that we can attempt is to indicate some meanings that it is meant to convey. Firstly, in popular as well as in philosophical use, it may designate some single conscious phase in the life-history of an individual, or it may stand for all that the individual has "gone through." Secondly, the popular and philosophical uses differ in one important respect. The popular use tends (generally speaking) to pay regard to the *effect* of what has been "gone through," regarding the latter as an influence shaping the individual in knowledge, skill, or character. The philosophical use does not dwell on the *result*, but on the phases of conscious life (in the history of the individual) themselves. This same abstraction from results is, however, often found in *popular speech*, as when we say that one man "profits by experience" while another does not. As a tentative definition adapted more or less to philosophical usage, we may say that experience is "the record of consciousness whether of ourselves or others." In a narrower sense more popular than scientific, it may mean knowledge of objects (physical nature, human life, and so on) gained through personal observation.

Returning to the philosophical use, and its implication, there is a special reference to *conscious* states through which the individual has passed. But these states of consciousness grade insensibly into states that cannot be thus described. (Some readers would object to any assumption of continuity between the

conscious and the unconscious, but perhaps it will be in order if we introduce the term "subconscious.") As factors in shaping the individual mind they have an influence, and (I personally believe) a far greater influence than is commonly supposed. However, the question arises as to how far these are to be "counted in" under the title *experience*? No agreement seems to have been arrived at. But this is a side-issue and need not detain us.

As the result of the preceding inquiry, we are justified in assigning to the term "experience" the meaning "psychical matter of fact." And this psychical matter of fact, according to Taylor,<sup>1</sup> is our only voucher for reality—indeed, our only reality. How can it be anything else? Existence itself, as Buddhism tells, is only momentary flashpoints of consciousness. And our ego is infallible, or at least seems so, in its immediate cognitions. After all, it may be that there is a "correspondence" between the intrinsic order of Nature and man's intuitive grasp of it. It is like the meeting and mingling of underground streams.

But this is not how the man of science "labels" reality. It is perhaps profitable to linger a moment over his notion of it. Referring to the question popularly expressed as "Are Space and Time real?" Schlick says: "Of course the decision of this question depends upon what is understood by 'Reality.' Now, even if this conception is difficult, perhaps even

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 23.

impossible, to define, yet the physicist is in the happy position of being able to satisfy himself with a definition which allows him to fix the limits of his realm with absolute certainty. 'Whatever can be measured is real.' The physicist can use this sentence of Planck's as a general criterion, and say that only that which is measurable possesses indisputable reality, or, to define it more carefully, physical objectivity."<sup>1</sup> Let us examine this dictum a little more closely.

We do not in any proper sense of the term necessarily "measure" a thing, or some quality of an event, when we have attached a number to it. In Mineralogy we have Moh's scale of hardness, but we do not say that we have "measured" the hardness of a garnet when we say that it is 7. Such numbers are merely registration indices and are only of significance through their serial order. So also we may say that the temperature of one object is 100° C. and that of another 50°. But there would be no sense in saying that we have "measured" either. Measurement implies the existence of a unit, and the possibility of specifying other quantities in terms of this unit. Here we are dealing with a human convention that is useful for certain purposes, but is of no wider relevancy. To separate the measurable side of things from their totality is, in the first place, like separating a whirlpool from the river. And then, to seek for "Reality" in this abstraction is something analogous to looking for the "Essence" in

<sup>1</sup> *Space and Time* . . . , p. 23.

a lump of foam. Which, to put it mildly, is a mockery.

Now we may provisionally formulate the relation (or, more cautiously, *a* relation) between truth and reality, to this effect: *reality is truth for the time being.*

This is how we would formulate our own doctrine, but hear William James. "Realities," he says, "are not *true*, they are; our beliefs are true *of* them. But I suspect that in the anti-pragmatist mind the two notions interchange their attributes. The reality itself, I fear, is treated as if 'true,' and conversely. Whoso tells us of the one, it is then supposed, must also be telling us of the other; and a true idea must in a manner *be*, or at least *yield* without extraneous aid, the reality it cognitively is possessed of. . . . To this absolute-idealistic demand pragmatism simply opposes its *non possumus*. If there is to be truth, it says, both realities and beliefs about them must conspire to make it; but whether there ever is such a thing, or how anyone can be sure that his own beliefs possess it, it never pretends to determine."<sup>1</sup>

We cannot help admiring the dialectical skill of William James; but the problem is shrouded in a veil and mist of words. No clear jet of thought illumines our darkness.

Let us make an attempt at clarity. As soon as a subject comes into relation with an object, the notions

<sup>1</sup> "The Pragmatist Account of Truth," in *The Meaning of Truth*, p. 196 f.

of truth and reality begin to operate, at least so long as we grant one of the two, or both, the faculties of "seeing" and "thinking." The words truth and reality then rise up as the internal and external states of being. Their rôles are strictly relative. But as every event must happen "somewhere" and "some-when," truth and reality are perpetually "on the make," seeking endless adjustments. The why of this appears to be a frontier-problem of man's intellect. "The wonder like the beauty of life," writes Mr. Thomas Sturge Moore, "depends on the absence of a solution. If we knew why, they would become mechanical effects. That is why any solution seems inadequate, and our hope must be that it truly is so."<sup>1</sup> "*Neti neti*," that is not so, that is not so, is the final word of cognition.

But, paradoxical as it may seem, all generalizations are necessarily false. Value and meaning can only attach to the particular and concrete. In our æsthetic judgments we are willing to admit that Beauty is not to be found, though there is a plenitude of beautiful objects. It is the unique element in each object that brings the case within our categories. A quality that belongs to all things—say, the brightness of this or that picture—carries no importance in our eyes. It is this or that degree of brightness that has significance for us.

It is the same in regard to truth and reality. The particular truth and reality are all that the words

<sup>1</sup> Personal letter.



"truth" and "reality" can lay claim to. It is here that I find the fundamental defect of the Hindu mind : its inveterate habit of flaming up into universals. No doubt there are notable exceptions, for instance, Patanjali. It was he who said : "All knowledge must ultimately be knowledge of the particular and concrete." Speaking for myself, I am entirely at one with him.

Not that I do not believe there is an absolute Truth and Reality. But this is a topic that goes beyond the limits of the present essay. I will return to it a little later on.

## UPRISE OF RELIGIONS

### REVELS ALL

CHILDREN when they see a puppet show wonder at the spectacle. A few thoughtful ones among them may inquire as to whether the figures move themselves or are manipulated by agents behind the scenes. In such wise have men looked upon the world around them. The study of ancient cultures and of primitive societies of to-day amply illustrates this statement.

We have no means of knowing how men of the Stone Age looked upon the totality spread before them. It is as difficult for us to construct as are the meditations of a cat blinking in the sunshine. When we come to times nearer our own—within the range of history—we find ourselves in what may be called the period of the gods. This attitude held sway among the peoples of ancient India, Egypt, and Greece. But the deeper thinkers resolved the Many into One. They held that one God was the controller of all things. This was the phase of monotheism as opposed to polytheism. Historically, the former phase—that of monotheism—has triumphed. It is the foundation-stone of most of the religions of civilization. It prevails to-day.

Jehovah, Brahma, Zeus, Osiris, Allah are the names that different peoples have given to their High Gods. The psychology of these gods is indeed an attractive topic, and throws much light on the intellectual development of those who conceived them.

Modern science as such gives no countenance to the God-idea. It is concerned solely with the observation, accurate description, and correlation of phenomena. In the matter of God (or gods) it is frankly agnostic.

It is therefore with something like a shock that we find Sir James Jeans telling us that "the universe appears to have been designed by a pure mathematician."<sup>1</sup> He comes to this conclusion after dismissing the claims of a divine biologist or divine engineer. We are left with a divine mathematician.<sup>2</sup>

This takes us no further until we agree what mathematics is. One may say that it is the *consistency of conventions*. The human mind arrives at certain abstract notions, and deduces relations among these. But the "truths" of mathematics only hold within that particular universe of discourse in which they were engendered. They have no validity apart from this. They have the same kind of truth as the statements in a romance. Consider, for example, Euclidean geometry. It sets out from certain conceptions—objects of thought—of a highly abstract character

<sup>1</sup> *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 134.

such as “plane,” “point,” and “straight line,” and from certain simple propositions (“axioms”) concerning them.

From the assumed data we derive, by recognized procedure called “logical,” all the other propositions in geometry. When we speak of a proposition as “true,” we mean simply that its derivation is “correct”—that is, that in obtaining it we have throughout obeyed the “rules of the (logical) game.” Proceeding in this intention, we create the noble edifice of Euclidean geometry, a monument of constructive thought.

But, the edifice so far accomplished, the time arrives for us to step back a little and assess, from the standpoint of a larger world and wider interests, the value of what we have achieved.

We will first take note of one or two general considerations that the situation invites. First, we have used the term “true” as synonymous with “correctly derived.” In this sense no meaning can be attached to the question: Are the axioms true?—for these are not derived. In fact these axioms, and the abstract conceptions to which they are applied, are more or less arbitrary creations of our own—dogmatic postulates. The reason for calling them “more or less arbitrary” will be apparent from what follows. What the geometer, *per se*, is concerned with, is solely the *internal coherence* of the structure of thought that he elaborates. With its relevancy to other regions of thought, and especially to the

world of perceptual experience, he has (in his capacity as geometer) no direct concern.

And this brings us to the second reflection. The student of the history of human thought will have met with many examples of "systems" elaborated from dogmatic postulates, marvels of structural coherence and each one "in se ipso totus, teres, atque rotundus." Theology, Ethics, Jurisprudence, all afford illustrations. But "our little systems have their day, they have their day and cease to be." Is the edifice of Euclideanism more than a "baseless fabric," an "insubstantial pageant"?

The mathematician, *qua* mathematician, has to deal only with ideal constructions and assumed data, and is simply concerned with the *logic* of the procedure. If his results apply to *experience*, well and good. But the searching of phenomenal experience is a different province altogether. *That* is the task of the *physicist*. Of course the enterprise of the geometer is *suggested* by experience (just as the problem of the ethicist is suggested by practical considerations). But the geometer is no more concerned with the empirical origin of space phenomena than the ethicist is with the problems of real life.

Indeed, in my opinion, mathematics as such does not claim to possess objective validity at all. Geometry makes no assertions concerning reality. "Whenever," Paulsen tells us, "its propositions are employed to determine reality, e.g. in astronomical calculations, they lose their apodictic character and

become hypothetical . . ." In a word, as Einstein puts it, "as far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality."<sup>1</sup>

There is no warrant whatever, then, for such a sweeping assertion as that "the architect of the universe is a pure mathematician." The fact that we find quantitative laws in the universe does not touch the present issue. If the architect of the universe is a pure mathematician, then he is singularly limited in his outlook. I am inclined to class Sir James's fancy with Bacon's *Idols of the Den*.

All this emphasizes the truth that men of science are not necessarily men of wide horizons. Immersed in their own particular studies, they are apt to become myopic in regard to all others. "Men," says Taylor, "who are capable of excellent work in the domain of mathematical or experimental sciences sometimes" (I should say usually) "prove incompetent in metaphysics."<sup>2</sup> It is safe to say that a man of science seldom proves himself competent in philosophical speculation. Profoundly engaged in the study of particular classes of natural phenomena, he is usually too much engrossed in the immense and ever-accumulating details of his special science to take a comprehensive view of things. We know the crude metaphysics of Newton. Sir James confesses that he is "a stranger in the realms of philosophical

<sup>1</sup> *Sidelights on Relativity*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 8.

thought.”<sup>1</sup> How, then, can he venture to pronounce on such a difficult problem as the intellectual character of the Creator?

No such charge can be laid against the artist as such. He is open to all the winds of heaven. He is a synoptic spirit. Let us take a concrete example to illustrate what we mean. It is held by some Relativists that the theory of Relativity—shall we say the discoveries of Relativity?—makes no inroads on the province of Metaphysics. With this opinion I feel compelled to differ.

Metaphysics begins, in my view, precisely where “physics” lays down its labours. Aristotle’s editors, in placing his treatises on “first philosophy” *μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*, “after the physical treatises,” invented, by accident, the most appropriate name for the subject. And if, in its exploration of Space and Time, Relativity has transformed our conceptions of these factors of experience, Metaphysics has to reckon with these transformations—and the transformed conceptions are its proper data and point of departure.

How can it be said, when Relativity abolishes, as it claims to abolish, a time-continent, that this has no bearing on metaphysical doctrine?

It seems to be asserted that Relativity may be granted its own little province—a province of “mere mathematics”—where its inner consistency and logical symmetry are beautiful to behold—yet that all this has nothing to do with the deeper calls and

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, Foreword, p. 8.



needs that Metaphysics has to respond to. We appear to be told that Metaphysics signifies some inexpugnable citadel, some province immune against all attack.

That this is an unreasonable attitude need hardly be stressed. "The study of nature has revealed to us that the nature we study is not independent of the mind which studies it. There is no absolute physical reality which mind may contemplate in its pure independence of the contemplator and the conditions of his contemplation." Relativity tells us that "every observer is himself the absolute, and not, as has been hitherto supposed, the relative, centre of the universe. There is no universe common to all observers and private to none."<sup>1</sup> It is here that Relativity and Metaphysics are indissolubly linked together. "Esse est percipi." Berkeley's doctrine and dictum links on to the following passage in Eddington. (The passage occurs in a general consideration of the relation between the "two parties to every observation—the observed and the observer.")

"Whether we are able to go further and obtain a knowledge of the world, which not merely does not particularize the observer, but does not postulate an observer at all; whether if such knowledge could be obtained, it could convey any intelligible meaning; and whether it could be of any conceivable interest to anybody if it could be understood—these questions need not detain us now. The answers are not neces-

<sup>1</sup> Wildon Carr, *The Problem of Truth*, p. 22 f.

sarily negative, but they lie outside the normal scope of physics."<sup>1</sup> In other words, they lie in the province of Metaphysics.

We may accept all this, but a further question cannot fail to present itself, namely: How far, and in what way, are we called upon to modify—even to the extent of rejecting—the traditional ideas concerning Space and Time and the conceptual categories in terms of which our apprehension of experience has hitherto been attempted? In short, how far does the revolution in physics affect our metaphysics and epistemology—whether naïve or academic and speculative?

Mr. Thomas Whittaker, in his *Prolegomena to a New Metaphysic*, has shown how far he is prepared to go. Personally, I am inclined to think that the reverberations of the relativistic revolution are only limited by the limits of thought itself. Armchair philosophy is an anachronism. Much of what the ancients have told us—whether in East or West—may need to be rejected—"scrapped," if the reader likes. Of course, on a closer view, all progress is from point to point. Galileo found his interpreter in Descartes; Newton in Kant; Einstein is still waiting for a new philosopher to interpret a new epistemology. And yet, to some at least, Relativity itself appears under the form of a relation. There is no end to what the mind of man is capable of conceiving.

<sup>1</sup> Eddington, *Space, Time and Gravitation*, p. 31.

Anyway, the artist recognizes no citadels, no provinces too sacrosanct for his entry. His

eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to  
heaven . . .

He is the æolian harp responsive to every breeze. "We do not attend sufficiently," said Shelley, "to what passes within ourselves. Let us contemplate facts; let us, in the great study of ourselves, resolutely compel the mind to a rigid consideration of itself. We are not content with conjecture, and inductions, and syllogisms in science regarding external objects. As in these, let us also, in considering the phenomena of the mind, severally collect the facts which cannot be disputed. Metaphysics will thus possess this conspicuous advantage over every other science, that each student by attentively referring to his own mind, may ascertain the authorities upon which any assertions regarding it are supported. There can thus be no deception, we ourselves being the depositaries of the evidence of the subject which we consider." These words might have come from the pen of Kant. Indeed, the artists have often beaten the specialists at their own game.

How, then, does it go with the artist's universe? In the universe that he contemplates he finds the same play of phantasy that he finds in his own creative work. Wherever he looks, he detects the same exuberant fecundity, the same tireless activity, the

same creative joy. To him the power that Sir James postulates is not a "pure mathematician," but a Creative Artist. This summus Artifex seems to delight in sheer variety as though for the mere joy of creating. He is the Master of the Revels—the Internal Artist, as Bruno has said.

Indeed, to the artist "all the world's a play." It is as though we were performers in a play within a play.

It is the Hindu Lila over again. The Human Comedy and the Divine Comedy are counterparts. He who has realized this, however imperfectly, is at least free, to use the words of Horace, "from the vain hectics of the fool." He knows that he is but a moment in the Play of Nature, and Nature herself but a short Act. Creative Chance is the overlord of all.

Here, happily or unhappily, the artist finds himself in the domain of the incomprehensible, before the ultimate mystery, of that which "eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man." And his mind, tired of idle conjecture, turns as on a potter's wheel.

Revels here—revels there—revels all. Such is the last word of the thinking man.

But is this the *finale* of the human experiment? It may be so. Personally, I do not believe it. In fact, before I set down my point of view, I feel compelled to examine the place of intellect in human experience.

THE KALI OF THE WESTERN  
WORLD

HOWEVER highly the function of intellect may be esteemed—if only to redeem our universe from chaos—it is not uncommon to find the profounder spirits referring to intellect in a certain tone of disparagement. I think there is some justification for this attitude, though the reasons usually advanced are far from satisfactory.

If we look at intellectual eminence as we actually find it among men, we must be impressed, I believe, by the fact that with the possession of great intellectual grasp and subtlety we sometimes, perhaps not infrequently, vaguely feel that something is lacking that plain human beings, of no pretensions to this dialectical facility, seem to possess. For this missing element I know no fitting name, though "touch with reality," "soul," "intuition," "mystical experience" dimly shadow forth what is meant. There is much exquisite thinking that we feel disposed to call "mere empty cleverness," a mere *tour de force* of logical *expertise*. Looking back in the history of thought,

perhaps the much-abused Scholasticism may be held to give us abundant illustrations.

Now, what is the ultimate function of the intellect? "It seems," says Taylor, "as if the function of mere intellect were always that of a necessary and valuable intermediary between a lower and a higher level of immediate apprehension. It breaks up, by relations and distinctions it introduces, the original union of the *what* and the *that* of simple feeling, and proceeds to make the *what*, which it deals with in its isolation, ever more and more complex. But the ultimate issue of the process is only reached and its ultimate aim only satisfied so far as it conducts us at a higher stage of mental development to the direct intuition of a richer and more comprehensive whole in the immediate unity of its *that* and *what*."<sup>1</sup> In other words, intellect is not *creative* but *critical*. In its functions it might well be equated with the performance of a weighing-machine. It is, in fact, as Jevons would say, the "Logical Machine."

The prominent quality of intellect I would describe as "mechanical." It is fundamentally concerned in bringing coherence and consistency into a "given" that, *qua* intellect, it is not called upon, or is not accompanied by any impulse, to transcend. Of course in this connection we are reminded of Bergson and various older "intuitionists"—for example, Jacobi. But the most daring exponent of the creed in our own times is undoubtedly Léon Chestov. In

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 153.

tome after tome he has tried to establish the limitations of intellect. Despite his Russian volubility and exaggeration, his last book, *In Job's Balances*, is a work of real importance. It tells us that the really "important, eternal things" lie beyond the pale of intellect. Reason, we are aptly reminded, is a Hellenic deity. This Kali of the Western world has no such claim on *our* allegiance.

Now this may be true. Nevertheless, a qualification seems called for. Chestov, for instance, tends to forget that reason itself is rooted in instinct. Not its suppression, but its controlled use, is what we would urge. Reason plays the same part in life that the *douane* plays in commercial affairs: it can sift the goods that are presented, but cannot create them. This is a point on which we must be very clear.

From another point of view, intellect would seem to be entirely concerned with practical interests. As Bergson would say, it is a special tool created by that *elan vital* which underlies the entire evolutionary process. This tool is an index, not of truth, but of utility. In its process it limits and distorts the larger intuition of reality which flows through the vital impulse out of which consciousness itself appears to emerge. The falsification, however, works; and is justified by its results. But the fluent in the real escapes the purview of our intelligence.<sup>1</sup> All this would seem to be words without meaning. It is a

<sup>1</sup> Henry Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 174 f.



circumlocutory way of saying that the intellect is a good servant, and nothing more.

All mentality can be reduced, say the Evolutionists, to the type of reflex action. "Cognition," says William James, "is but a feeling moment, a cross-section at a certain point of what in its totality is a motor phenomenon." Such, it would seem, is the conclusion of Pavlov, too. The fact is, no living organism, as long as it is alive, is largely under the sway of intellect. The organism comes within the purview of intellect only after death, when it has become a mere aggregate of chemical elements. Then, and not till then, do the laws of intellect apply. This implies that intellect is only visible *post mortem*.

Whether one agrees or not with their views as a whole, the pragmatists, especially W. James, J. Dewey, and F. C. S. Schiller, agree in subordinating intellect to life. According to their theory, the intellect, *qua* intellect, is incapable of deciding what is truth. They assert that whatever justifies itself to living experience is to be counted true. But that is a convention, and need not detain us. What concerns us for the moment is the fact that Pragmatism, whatever else it may be, is an uncompromisingly anti-intellectualist theory.

Perhaps a word might be said about Vaihinger. In his much-discussed book, *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*, he says that the function of intellect is not the discovery of truth, but the pre-calculation of occurrences which are to be designated sensations. The most

delicate creations of the intellect are not reproductions of the real, but fictions. Euclidean geometry is as much or as little maintainable as Lobatchewsky's. It is all very pleasant "make-believe"—a game invented by the mind of man, and, accordingly, in due course, to be superseded.

We can now understand how it is that the questions we call ultimate cannot even be touched by the intellect. The *raison raisonnante*, by itself, is a purely destructive force. Pushed to its logical extreme, it offers but one goal to mankind: collective suicide. The life and writings of Mainländer are a case in point. But the larger spirits—a Pascal, a Shakespeare, a Dostoievsky, a Nietzsche, a Ramakrishna—seem to have denounced reason as an impostor. It is an impertinence, they appear to say, to foist on God or universal life concepts developed by the mind of man—concepts issuing from partial and limited experience. Not being of the same dimensions as the mind, life will not fit any intellectual mould.<sup>1</sup> It is as a child enjoys it, or as a mystic apprehends it, that life consents to yield up its secret.

<sup>1</sup> Now perhaps we may be able to understand why the Buddha was ever silent concerning ultimate questions. (So was Socrates.) He, as the arch-intellectualist, knew but too well the limitations of intellect. But he never pretended to transcend his own limitations, or those of his fellow-humans. Having accomplished his self-imposed task, he held his peace.

## LAST WORDS FROM ALICE

THIS leads me to an envisagement that to our eminently practical and conventional sensible man would of course seem phantastic and even silly. But a new mythos—truth manifested in a new way—though it may have been anticipated *aliunde*, may well bear a fresh expression.

As we are beginning to find out, intellect counts for nothing in the life of a child. The child's point of view has not even tintured the philosophy of maturity. This is a great gain for those who study it sympathetically. The child's outlook, if adequately investigated, would enrich the whole of our "philosophy." It is, happily, now being carried on by competent students under the name of *paidology*. But, unfortunately, it has not yet entered our customary modes of thought. I can only draw the attention of the reader to this new study. We have much to learn from it.

To begin with, the child's experience is often taken to be an imperfect model of mature experience, as though the child were an embryonic replica of the adult. This we hold to be a popular fallacy. As a

matter of fact, the child's life is complete in itself—as complete as that of any “grown-up.” It is individual and unique. Here lies the special interest of our inquiry.

The child is fundamentally active, and his activity is always purposive. When we say “purposive,” we mean that it serves some end, whether the child is conscious of that end or not. This leads to the consideration that the young organism responds automatically to the call of its needs. Is it a far-fetched fancy that there is a pre-established harmony between the young organism and its environment? For myself, I think not. I should rather say that it is our so-called culture that introduces discord. It might well be called the *Atē* of the human drama. Intellect is verily the beguiler. It detracts from the divine simplicity of reality. Intellect, we may be sure, is the Devil himself.

But let us proceed a step further in our pilgrimage through the universe of the child. Conscience, in any meaning of the term, has no significance or relevance in the mind of the child. It is special to the sophisticated consciousness of the adult—a resultant, it may be, of environmental and cultural antecedents, and therefore something superimposed on the human spirituality. The primeval psyche has been most oppressively overladen with foreign excrescences. This is the real “Fall of Man”—the true “Paradise Lost.”

Just as intellect plays no part in the budding adven-

ture of the young organism, so does its life move on a non-ethical plane. Innate truths or standards have no meaning in its consciousness. These are what we may call societal accretions. What the child brings into its world is a psycho-physical organism which is perfectly attuned to all the calls of its environment. Success in its adventures depends not on any ratiocinative activity, but on the practical outcome of these adventures. This leads us perhaps to return to our daring suggestion that logic on its speculative side is a presumptuous frivolity. It has no connection whatever with reality. Is it therefore a matter for wonder that the child should know nothing of these things? Right and wrong have no place in the child's universe.

Again, in the mind of the child there is no significant distinction between the world of actuality and the world of phantasy. The real and the imaginary are one.

We might pursue the topic to a wearisome length, in our effort to show how differently the child reacts to the universe from the sophisticated adult. The intrinsic difference is nothing but *absolute trust in the reality of things as they appear and an outgoing faith that covers all things*. Jesus' declaration that the adults can enter the Kingdom of Heaven—the Kingdom of Absolute Reality—only by becoming as little children, receives its meaning and its truth only by such interpretation.

The other and parallel path of the reconciliation

is the way of the mystic, who would claim his way as that of the "twice-born." But this is a topic that demands deeper elucidation. Our so-called mystics (many of them) have thrown darkness rather than light on their golden message. It should be our endeavour to disperse this Cimmerian gloom.

It is astonishing to find that the term "mysticism" so often carries with it a connotation of a derogatory nature. Among the matter-of-fact nations of the West the word may (not infrequently) be translated simply "misty or obscure." We find people talking of "Eastern mysticism." This is mere foolishness. We have only to look closer to see that it is omnipresent: time and place in this connection are irrelevant. We have to do with the existence of a very remarkable and distinct phenomenon.

But the word "mysticism," like "love," has acquired an infinity of meanings and applications, and so has come to signify nothing, because it may signify so much. It is this holophrastic character that alienates us from the word. But no better substitute seems to be available; so we must needs tolerate it, giving it in each case whatever kind of precision suits the needs of the case.

In *Shakespeare through Eastern Eyes* I defined mysticism as "experience purged of the Categories." I meant thereby that it is a mode of cognition in which logic and reason play no part. As thus characterized, it is clearly akin to the sciousness of the child. This at once relieves the words "mystic"

and "mysticism" of any falsifying misinterpretations. We are concerned with a *pure awareness*.

Awareness of what? Many who have written on the subject seem to think that the objective of the awareness is relevant, but this we hold to be fundamentally erroneous. So we conclude that mysticism is not *an end*, but a *path*—a path not to any particular and specifiable objective, but a path akin to this or that "way" of the Buddhists. We must not confuse it with Aristotle's *Catharsis*: it is no mere clearance or purging: it is infinitely more penetrating. It is not a negative, but a positive process, or, rather, procedure.

The reader will probably think that I am indulging in dark words, but for the moment I have nothing better to offer. I would request him to restrain his impatience a little longer. Words are very definite labels, capable, at best, of suggesting every nuance of thought and feeling. But there are some experiences of the spirit for which no fitting words have been invented. "Mysticism" is one of these: it has even been equated with the ineffable. It is not easy to illuminate the concentrated gloom of centuries.

It is customary to suppose that a "way" must lead somewhere, and be guided by a definite end. But all ends are arbitrary. It is the glory of the mystic that he has transcended this necessity. He is the one spirit who has escaped from the "whatness of the that." This might well be the definition of the mystic.



Now, in the *positive procedure* (which we have consented to identify with mysticism) there is one, the cathartic stage—the emptying phase, when all that has been acquired has to be thrown overboard. The contents of consciousness have to be reduced to zero, and the ego brought to a mere capacity. This might be called the Tragedy of Thought. It is the great lesson of renunciation—complete surrender :

Entsagen musst du, musst entsagen.<sup>1</sup>

In a word, this is the abdication of the ego.

The second stage in the "path" is the realization of the impersonality of the real. The terms "I" and "thou" are thus deprived of all significance.<sup>2</sup> Here we have a rectification of the objective, whether of mysticism or of thought. It fixes for us the quest, not the form of the solution. It is like the  $x$  in an algebraic equation. That this is not a purely negative operation need hardly be stressed. It is akin to the imaginary symbols of mathematics. In plain language, it is in the first place a mere groping—a groping in which all distinctions of "I" and "thou" have vanished.

The third stage is the blotting out of all content of consciousness, and a patient waiting on the silence. But silence is not a mere blank ; it is a voice. To this voice the ears of the mystic are abnormally sensitive.

<sup>1</sup> "You must renounce."

<sup>2</sup> Hegel, too, saw this from a different point of view.

The foregoing are steps in the momenta of the neophyte's progress. Of course this brings him to the level of the child. Would he desire anything better?

"Sic et non"—as Abelard might have said. The circle must turn full—the child, in the course of its adventure, becomes aware of its golden privilege. "Ripeness is all," said Shakespeare; and he was well qualified to express an opinion. And we have the audacity to agree that the mystic is at the apex of the human adventure.

Wherefore? Simply because his psyche is now a plenum. A plenum of what? A plenum of sacramental love. It is then that the awareness comes that this universe is the intermittent play of a fountain; each efflux gives significance to the source and to the jet; the same energy accounts for both. This energy, whose other name is creative love—(a love that does not exclude creative risks)—manifests itself in the tiniest grain of sand and in the flaming ramparts of the world. The entire universe, then, is to be trusted. Holy is the raindrop, holy the river, holy is the mighty ocean. In a word, the whole Creation moves to the music of Krishna's lute—his Song of Love. It is this that pulses through all things. This creed is voiced in all climes and in all tongues. Browning's *cri du cœur* is typical:

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.

Such is the *credo* of the mystic. All that has been,

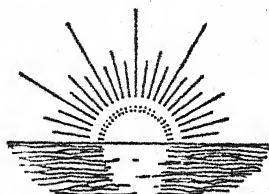
is, or shall be, is all one to him—the Play of Creative Love. It is the coming of *Karuna*.

A fiction, this? Maybe. Nevertheless, it is true. It represents the “Alice in Wonderland” of our adventure in life. It is *her* last words on her experiment in humanism. We trust her beyond all things.  
*Om . . . Shanti . . .*



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